

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST
WORK SESSION Minutes
February 9, 2026
7:30 PM**

The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231, have been satisfied by the inclusion of the date, time and place of this meeting in the annual schedule of meetings of this Governing Body. Such schedule of meetings was published as required by law and is posted at Borough Hall, on the Borough website and filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Present: Mayor Bernstein, Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Absent: None

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney
Nick Chelius, Borough Engineer

Mayor Bernstein invited Afan Munawar, Mikaeel Hussain, Mert Bakircioglu and Umar Munawar, local children representing the Muslim community to come forward and assist with the recitation of the Ramadan / Eid Proclamation for 2026.

The children thanked the Mayor and Council for not only recognizing their holiday but the continuing to celebrate and recognize the diversity of the community. They then reach the following proclamation.

Ramadan / Eid Proclamation 2026

WHEREAS, Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is the holiest time of the year for Muslims across the globe where they fast, reflect, and strengthen their faith through prayers, reading the Holy Quran, acts of charity, and emphasizing self-decipline; and

WHEREAS, this tradition of fasting from sunrise to sundown has been observed for thousands of years, carried from place to place; and

WHEREAS, The Holy month of Ramadan concludes with Eid al-Fitr, which means “festival of the breaking of the fast”, a celebration that brings Muslims together to celebrate generations of traditions-such as charity (zakat) and gift-giving.

WHEREAS, Muslim Americans in our community make significant contributions in all aspects of our lives: and

WHEREAS, the Governing Body of the Borough of Demarest encouraging residents to recognize the significance of the celebration of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr will lead to greater understanding within our community;

WHEREAS, the Borough of Demarest is the home to many Muslim residents, who strengthen and enrich our community with their valued history, culture, heritage and traditions and diversity represents one of the Borough's greatest strengths, and the Demarest community joins with the people of Muslim heritage across New Jersey and those around the world celebrating Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Demarest joins our Muslim residents and neighbors in honoring and celebrating Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr.

Mayor Bernstein thanked the children for their participation and noted that he was proud of their willingness to share about their religion and culture and respects their pride in their community. He then finished the proclamation as follows:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mayor Brian Bernstein, on behalf of the entire Governing Body of the Borough of Demarest, do hereby recognize and proclaim February 17, 2026 through March 19, 2026 as the celebration of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr in Demarest; and we call this observance to the attention of all our residents in the Borough of Demarest, and call upon our residents to learn and recognize the cultural and historical significance of the holiday, observing with appropriate activities and programs.

Mayor Bernstein then presented Umar Munaway and Huma Munawar with the signed proclamation.

ORDINANCE (INTRODUCTION): *(none)*

ORDINANCE PUBLIC HEARING (ADOPTION):

ORDINANCE # 1173-26 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 175 – ZONING TO INCREASE THE SUBSIDY FOR AFFORDABLE ACCESSORY APARTMENTS TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2025 HOUSING ELEMENT & FAIR SHARE PLAN

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to open the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 1173-26. The motion was approved by all on a voice vote.

Mayor Bernstein asked if anyone wishes to be heard concerning adoption of this ordinance.

Speaker(s):

Mr. Cywinski asked how long the deed restriction for an accessory apartment lasts. Mayor Bernstein answered ten years. Mr. Cywinski if the restriction could be longer. Ms. Falkenstern stated that she does long believe so, but will confirm with the Planner.

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Council President Slowikowski to close the Public Hearing on this ordinance and that it be adopted with notice of final passage to be published as required by law.

ROLL CALL:

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss
Nays: None

Resolution 059-26 A Resolution to Endorse the Amended 2025 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan

A motion to approve Resolution No. 059-26 was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Reiss.

ROLL CALL:

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss
Nays: None

Work Session Discussion Items:

Engineering Report

Mr. Chelius reviewed the monthly engineering report, highlighting upcoming paving projects including two bid openings scheduled for February 19 for spring paving projects.

Councilmember Collins noted that residents have complained about speeding on Woodland and wondered if paving would contribute to this. Mr. Chelius explained that there is no widening of the road.

Consent Agenda

Mayor Bernstein asks if any member would like to have any resolution removed from the consent agenda and voted on separately.

Mayor Bernstein asks if any member would like to abstain from voting on any resolution on the consent agenda.

Mayor Bernstein asks for a motion to accept the consent agenda (with any abstentions noted)

Consent Agenda:

- Resolution No. 053-26 Award of Contract for Gazebo Refurbishment
- Resolution No. 054-26 Return of Escrow
- Resolution No. 055-26 Authorizing Tax Refund
- Resolution No. 056-26 Designating Online Publication for Public Notices
- Resolution No. 057-26 Authorizing 2024 LOSAP Payments
- Resolution No. 058-26 Payment of Bills

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox to approve the consent agenda with the correction a typo on Resolution 053-26 of the contractor's name. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Reiss.

ROLL CALL:

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Nays: None

Meeting Open to the Public

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to open the meeting to the public. The motion was approved by all on a voice vote.

Speaker(s):

Ray Cywinski

Mr. Cywinski asked for the scope of work for the gazebo project. Councilmember Collins answered that it is a substantial rebuilding including ADA ramp, new roof, new lighting and drainage. He asked if the concrete base is being moved and reminded the Council that there is a time capsule in the base. The Mayor said the concrete base was not being changed and everyone including the special projects engineer and contractor are aware of the time capsule. He then asked the status of train station and was told that initial removal of items has begun including the archival material being moved to the Baptist Church. Mayor Bernstein noted that the historic structure and windows are not to be touched. Mr. Cywinski asked if the floor or ticket window were being preserved. Mayor Bernstein stated that the Borough is requiring the ticket window to be preserved as well as the ceiling, but the floor was put in by the DPW recently and not considered historic. Mr. Cywinski expressed concern over work that has been done. Mayor Bernstein advised that they will follow up with the contractor and will have the Borough Attorney check on the historic nature of the renovated items. Ms. Falkenstern advised that the Borough will follow up with the contractor and NJ Historic Preservation.

Mary Anne Clarke

Ms. Clarke advised that she entered an open door at the train station when she saw workers in the area and is disappointed that work she doesn't approve of was done at the trains station. She wants it restored to its original form. She asked where the archival records are. She says that she was not told and believes she should have been. She asked how she could gain access to the archives since there are items she is looking for. Mayor Bernstein asked her what items she was looking for. Ms. Clarke stated she wanted items related to the US 250th Anniversary but would not share which items. Mayor Bernstein advised that she should reach out to the Borough to arrange a time to look for the items.

Marian Hayden

Ms. Hayden asked if the train station obtained site plan approval. Mayor Bernstein stated that he does not believe that it will be required, but once plans are received if Counsel advises that site plan approval is required the Borough will comply.

Ray Cywinski

Mr. Cywinski again spoke about work at the train station and asked how Ms. Clarke could access the archives. He was told she can reach out to the Borough and access will be arranged.

Council President Slowikowski made a motion to close the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins and approved by all on a voice vote.

There being no other business before the Council, Councilmember Collins made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Council President Slowikowski and approved by all on a voice vote. The meeting was therefore adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern, RMC
Borough Clerk